

## VI. INNOVATIVE METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AT HIGHER AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENTS

### ESP COURSES IN UKRAINE TERTIARY EDUCATION: NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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**Abstract.** *The paper analyses the current demands and priorities in ESP teaching in tertiary education. The factors influencing the relevancy and efficiency of ESP courses to meet the challenges of modern education and the demands of the international labour market are under consideration.*

**Key words:** *English for Specific Purposes, educational environment, syllabus design, Content and Language Integrated Learning, team-teaching strategy, blended learning*

#### Introduction

From the early 1960's, when English for Specific Purposes appeared as a demand for an international language which had to be able to provide effective communication under the expansion in scientific, technical and economic activity, it has made a long way. Having experienced several stages of development, it has become one of the most significant areas in EFL teaching in tertiary education. Every new stage of ESP development was the result of learners' new goals and appropriate functions they were supposed to perform in their future professional career.

To meet modern challenges of tertiary education and the demands of the international labour market, most Ukrainian higher education institutions have introduced ESP courses and given them the priority. Being introduced into students' curriculum, they focus on training competitive professionals who will be able to cope with all the tasks in their professional career in multinational global environment using the knowledge gained during the years of study, or to continue successfully their study joining the world educational environment. With such language acquisition, students can participate in different programmes of academic mobility or be involved in international research projects.

No matter what stage ESP development we mean, the most important considerations have to be given to its difference from the general ESL courses, the analysis of learners' needs, the design of appropriate syllabus, the role of a teacher and the most effective approaches to the target language learning and the selection, tailoring and development of appropriate materials. The analysis of all these

aspects are still important for Ukrainian tertiary education institutions as Ukrainian students obtained new opportunities to be mobile in their education and enter the international employment market not so long ago. Therefore, it is reasonable to investigate what has changed in ESP teaching and what it is necessary to take into consideration to make it of particular value for Ukrainian students.

### **THE STAGES IN ESP DEVELOPMENT**

Before defining the main priorities in teaching ESP at present, it is necessary to do some retrospective analysis of the main ESP stages recognized by most linguists. In *English for Specific Purposes: A Learning-centered Approach*, Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters mentioned five phases that ESP has undergone. Each of these stage has its own peculiarity. The first stage was based on the concept of special language, which meant that language varies in relation to the field it is used. The task was to identify the grammatical and lexical features of the registers. Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters pointed out that ‘The aim was to produce a syllabus which gave high priority to the language forms students would meet in their Science studies and in turn would give low priority to forms they would not meet.’ [1,10]. The first phase of the register analysis-based syllabus was followed by the second phase which was closely connected with the field of discourse and rhetorical analysis. The accent was put mainly on how sentences were combined in discourse to generate some meaning. The third phase of target situation analysis supposed to create an ESP course which would make learners able to perform adequately in a target situation. The concept of needs analysis was prevailed at that time. The fourth stage of skills and strategies was not focused on the language itself but on the thinking processes involved. According to Tom Hutchinson and Alan Waters ‘The principal idea behind the skills-centred approach is that underlying all language use there are common reasoning and interpreting processes, which, regardless of the surface forms, enable us to extract meaning from discourse.’

[1, 13]. The final fifth phase of ESP development stated that the ESP course must be based on an understanding of the processes of a target language learning.

### **CURRENT STATE OF TEACHING ESP IN TERTIARY EDUCATION IN UKRAINE**

Having considered what ESP teaching was focused on in different phases of its development, it is easier to examine its present state of teaching in Ukrainian higher education institutions.

The first consideration of ESP teaching has always been about what differs ESL courses from traditional general English ones. Answering this question Hutchinson in 1987 stressed that ‘in theory nothing, in practice a great deal’. Nowadays, modern business trends demand from an ESP learner to be very flexible. The graduates majoring even in technical fields, who were mostly focused on reading special literature in the past, nowadays are supposed to be effective communicators. They should be able to deal with business correspondence, actively participate in discussions, negotiate, etc. It means that both approaches, ESP and general ESL should use the same methods and techniques to develop

equally and simultaneously all four language skills. In some curricula in Ukrainian institutions ESP follows the short course of general English. It seems to be logical, as students by the time they start learning ESP have already managed to gain some professional knowledge from their subject courses. But even at the stage of general English learning ESL teachers should not ignore the future professional interests of their students. Being aware of the necessity to take them into consideration, general English teachers try to build their syllabus in such a way that the ESP course can be a logical continuation of their own, at least, choosing appropriate content to work on. Therefore, it means that both approaches, ESP and general English, taught at higher education institutions have become closer and interrelated with respect to the final goals of education.

The second consideration of ESP teaching is the analysis of learners' needs. In comparison with previous phases, the current phase demands for very deep and thorough research. As Tony Dudley-Evans highlights, 'The establishment of needs is based on the activities that the learner has to perform in English, but this is only the first step; once we know which skills are needed and what activities learners will be engaged in, we need to carry out a more focused analysis of the genres and language involved in each of these skills and activities [2, 5]. At present, an ESP teacher should take into account not only the content of materials taught to equip the students with particular knowledge, but what the future graduates are expected to do in their working places. For instance, establishing the needs of engineering students, it is worth taking into consideration how the profile of an engineer has changed. In the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century it was a professional engineer, the second half of the 20th century brought onto the stage a scientific engineer, while the 21st century expects the appearance of an entrepreneurial or enterprising engineer on the labour market. The entrepreneurial engineer of the twenty-first century should be highly qualified professional, ready to find, evaluate and use all necessary information very quickly, acquire the tools of learning and use these tools proficiently, understand global and current issues necessary to work effectively, be excellent communicator and possess the managerial skills to identify needs and come up with new solutions. All these aspects should be taken into consideration while a proper ESP course is under development.

The design of an appropriate ESP course is a really complicated process. It must be developed on appropriate content with respect to required skills a learner has to gain to perform professional duties and to meet the demands of modern employer. Therefore, it should be based on the principle of Content and Language Integrated Learning. This task can be successfully achieved by the implementation of a team-teaching strategy which supposes teamwork of language teachers and content instructors proficient in the context of the study field. In addition, modern ESP courses should be designed with consideration to the opportunities of blended learning providing the possibility to combine online digital media with traditional classroom methods. And finally, the course must be

highly motivating and properly adapted to the demands of learners with respect to their language proficiency and course final expectations.

The crucial role in ESP teaching belongs to the selection and development of appropriate materials as they equip the learners with new professional knowledge through a target language. They cannot be selected randomly, as they have to develop simultaneously language skills and professional awareness. All materials must be authentic, relevant, interesting and motivating. A special consideration should be given to special vocabulary content since it presents the main concern of ESP learners' needs. ESP textbooks cannot meet all the challenges of modern education and provide students with realistic examples of future professional tasks, it is reasonable to supplement them with professional literature, lectures, demonstrations and presentations on the issues studied. A lot of materials can integrate the development of two or more language skills.

The role of an ESP teacher has changed significantly, and become very important, as they have to integrate a number of different functions. Now they are not only special language providers and trainers, they are experienced facilitators being able to motivate their students and develop their professional knowledge through a target language. They have to be effective collaborators and work creatively with subject area teachers. They should use a great diversity of modern effective language learning techniques and methods and show how to use these approaches in the most effective ways.

### **Conclusions**

To sum up, it should be noted that ESP teaching in Ukrainian universities must be sensitive to new challenges of higher education and the demands of highly competitive international labour market. To prepare proficient graduates who could be able to cope successfully with all the problems in multinational business environment, higher education institutions should use a wide range of modern strategies and methods and design ESP courses, which can be an integral part of students' university curricula.

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